

# **Illinois Early Learning Council**

## **Committee Updates**

- Program Quality and Quality Assurance
  - Workforce Development
  - Linkage and Integration
    - Expansion
  - Evaluation and Assessment

**October 2005 - January 2006**

# **Program Quality & Quality Assurance Committee**

## **PROGRESS REPORT**

### **GOALS**

- Enhance the quality of existing early childhood programs for children birth to five years of age.
- Ensure that high-quality services are provided in all publicly-funded early learning programs.

### **ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

Since October 2005, the Quality Committee has accomplished the following objectives:

- Worked with representatives of the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) Child Care Assistance Program, the Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA), the Chicago Department of Children and Youth Services, and the Quality Committee to develop an online survey to gather information about the readiness of child care programs in relation to Preschool For All program quality standards. Information on accessing the online survey will be sent to programs in late January or early February 2006, with the survey available on the INCCRRA website in February 2006.
- Presented results from focus groups and recommendations for inclusion of family child care providers in Preschool For All to the Early Learning Council at the October 2005 meeting. The Council asked the work group to continue to meet to prepare detailed program guidelines for the provision of preschool education in family child care homes. The work group has met twice since then, and is working to create guidelines and profiles of existing PreK programs that include family child care providers. See Work in Progress section below.
- Researched current early childhood education program standards and analyzed gaps between current program standards and proposed Preschool For All program quality standards.
- Reviewed IDHS' recommendations for tiered reimbursement designed to recognize and encourage increased levels of service quality in early care and education programs.

### **WORK IN PROGRESS**

The Committee continues to work toward its goal of enhancing the quality of all birth-to-five early learning programs throughout the state. The current work plan outlines action steps to meet this goal over the next several months. The Committee will continue its efforts to: 1) identify components of models for the inclusion of licensed family child care providers in Preschool For All and 2) assist in developing training resources for early childhood program personnel to ensure compliance with Preschool For All program quality standards. During 2006, the Committee will:

- Identify and develop resource materials to assist 0-3 programs funded through the Early Childhood Block Grant to implement research-based models that offer intensive, comprehensive services to infants and toddlers who are at risk of school failure and their families, as well as develop recommendations for more integrated 0-3 program monitoring, training and technical assistance.

- Create recommendations regarding inclusion of family child care providers in preschool education programs, including Preschool For All.
- Conduct an online survey of child care providers to assess their readiness in relation to Preschool For All program quality standards, analyze the data gathered through the survey, and present results to the Early Learning Council.
- Research current quality assurance systems for early care and education programs in Illinois, and make recommendations for an integrated system of monitoring, training, and technical assistance.
- Assist providers in understanding similarities between program standards across early childhood programs serving children ages 3-5.
- Create and distribute documents for providers that summarize best practices in early childhood care and education.
- Discuss the contents of training sessions about Preschool For All and proposed Tiered Reimbursement requirements in conjunction with entities that currently provide training to early childhood professionals.
- Work in conjunction with the Early Childhood Committee of the Children's Mental Health Task Force to review the recommendations in their strategic plan, and make recommendations to the full Council for support or action.

## **Workforce Development Committee** **PROGRESS REPORT**

### **GOALS**

- Ensure an adequate and stable supply of highly qualified and diverse early childhood professionals to provide high-quality early childhood services.

### **ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

- Monitored approval of the standards for an Associate of Arts in Teaching degree in Early Childhood Education that were passed by the Illinois Community College Board and the Illinois Board of Higher Education.
- Developed strategies for matching available early childhood teaching positions with qualified applicants.

### **WORK IN PROGRESS**

Over the remainder of 2006, the Workforce Development Committee will:

- Promote implementation of the Associate of Arts in Teaching degree in Early Childhood Education (AAT-ECE);
- Promote the ability of working early childhood students to receive credit for student teaching while retaining their positions and compensation to ensure that working practitioners with experience and some college coursework have opportunities to earn early childhood degrees and credentials;
- Pending availability of new funds, work to establish targeted early childhood teacher preparation program cohorts to help working practitioners obtain Type 04 teaching certificates, particularly those who are bilingual, from minority backgrounds, and are willing to work in community-based programs and schools in geographic shortage areas;
- Develop recommendations for training opportunities to increase the competency of practitioners in all early childhood programs to meet the needs of children and families from diverse cultures;
- Implement strategies for matching qualified applicants with vacant early childhood positions in both school and community-based PreK programs;
- Advocate for the development of more accessible Basic Skills Test preparation resources and materials, particularly for those students who are English Language Learners;
- Support the work of the Professional Development Advisory Committee to establish an integrated statewide early childhood professional development system;
- Explore adding early education components to mentoring and induction programs already operating in school districts; and
- Explore strategies to create a pipeline of well-qualified program administrators.

## **Linkage and Integration Committee** **PROGRESS REPORT**

### **GOALS**

- Improve coordination and integration across early childhood programs and systems to address the comprehensive nature of children's healthy development and readiness for school by:
  - Aligning program requirements across early childhood programs.
  - Developing strategies for linking children in license-exempt homes to early education programs.
  - Improving transitions for children moving from home and/or 0-3 programs to preschool programs to elementary schools.

- Linking early education programs to other services to meet the comprehensive needs of children from birth to age five and their families.

## **ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

- The Linkage and Integration Committee welcomes Assistant Secretary Grace Hou of the Illinois Department of Human Services as a Committee Co-Chair, along with Co-Chairs Jerry Stermer and Ann Alvarez.

## **WORK IN PROGRESS**

Over the next several months, the Committee will:

- Monitor the Full-Time Only Pilot currently under development by the Illinois Department of Human Services' Child Care Assistance Program to give parents who work or attend school full-time during non-traditional work hours the option of selecting full-time care and education programs offered during daytime business hours.
- Explore eligibility barriers experienced by families due to their immigration status.
- Develop recommendations and disseminate best practice information on transitions for all children, from home to 0-3 programs, from 0-3 programs to 3-5 programs and from 3-5 programs to school.
- Work in coordination with the Interagency Nutrition Council and other entities to link children, families, and early childhood program providers to other nutrition, physical activity, and health care services and training.
- Monitor progress on the Illinois Early Childhood Asset Mapping project, a state-of-the-art web-based database and geographical information system for early childhood services in Illinois to provide a comprehensive source of data and information on both the status and needs of young children in Illinois and the resources that exist to meet those needs.
- Monitor the Child and Adult Food Program being used by license-exempt providers.

## **Expansion Committee PROGRESS REPORT**

## **GOALS**

- Expand access to high-quality preschool for all three- and four-year-olds by building upon and enhancing existing programs, beginning with those children most at-risk for school failure.
- Expand access to high-quality early childhood programs for all at-risk children under three years of age.

- Convene a Transportation Workgroup to identify the challenges families and programs experience in arranging and funding transportation to early childhood programs, and develop potential short- and long-term transportation strategies to make programs accessible to more children and families.

## **ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

- Successfully convened the Transportation Workgroup, which meets bi-monthly. The Workgroup is comprised of a broad base of partners representing school districts, community-based programs, and advocates for low-income working families.
- Developed a survey to collect information about how selected Early Childhood Block Grant and Head Start programs provide transportation, as well as current transportation challenges they face. Profiles resulting from the survey will be posted on the Illinois Interagency Coordination Committee on Transportation (ICCT) website. The ICCT was legislatively established to improve transportation for disadvantaged populations.

## **WORK IN PROGRESS**

- Drafting a letter requesting the ICCT to include within its mission improving transportation for low-income families with young children who stand to benefit the most from participating in high-quality early education programs.
- Currently working to identify school and community-based programs from rural, suburban and urban areas across Illinois that are receiving transportation funding from the Early Childhood Block Grant and/or Head Start to interview for the survey.
- Planning to conduct telephone surveys of selected early childhood programs to identify key elements of successful transportation strategies, and subsequently develop profiles of successful transportation strategies based on data gathered from interviews, which will be posted on the ICCT statewide database.

## **Evaluation & Assessment Committee** **PROGRESS REPORT**

## **GOALS**

- Develop child assessment and program evaluation systems that support both individual children's learning and development and programs' continuous improvement.

## **WORK IN PROGRESS**

Once Preschool For All is formally proposed, the Evaluation and Assessment Committee will:

- Develop a more detailed plan to evaluate and monitor the implementation of the program